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Proposed History of the Special Research Branch,
Geography Division, Office of Basic and Geographic Intelligence

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1. It is proposed that [REDACTED] write a historical monograph of the Special Research Branch activities from 1949 to the present.

2. The Special Research Branch has mainly been engaged since 1952 in maintaining surveillance of Soviet progress in geodesy, gravimetry and other related earth sciences. The objective has been to establish a capability to assess a probable geodetic error contributing to projected Soviet ICBM targeting errors against targets in the United States. Projects actively pursued varied with time throughout the period. The successful Soviet launching of an earth satellite in 1957, for example, stimulated great interest in the earth as an individual geodetic body whose parameters of size and shape would affect missile targeting accuracies over long distances. Satellites of both the U.S. and U.S.S.R. have provided a capability to greatly reduce the location of uncertainties of widely spaced points on the earth's surface and to augment the work of the geodesist on the ground.

3. A few of the principal projects and investigations that were pursued are as follows:

a. Review of Soviet literature and reports [REDACTED] for evidence of the progress attained and the limits of Soviet accuracy standards.

b. Monitoring Soviet activity and probable intent in Antarctica.

c. Simulating a possible Soviet clandestine collection effort to penetrate U.S. Minuteman launch areas to improve positioning data on individual missile launch silos.

d. The same as c. but with the assumption that maps and aerial photographs would be employed.

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e. The study of possibilities available to the Soviets to attack the U.S. with a FOBS missile system and the attendant geographic significance of land masses that would be traversed.

f. Topographic limitations in the application of radar and optical line-of-sight studies in various parts of the world.

4. Additional activities that will be given attention in the proposed monograph are:

a. The Chief of the Branch was a member of several committees and briefed many individuals on Branch activities. The scope and highlights of this representation would be covered.

b. The Branch Chief was the project officer on a special contract between the U.S. Government and [REDACTED] University 25X1A5a1 involving the preparation of numerous geodetic reports concerned with the Soviet capabilities. Discussion would include observations on the experiences gained during the period of relationship with [REDACTED] University. 25X1A5a1

c. The export of geodetic instruments was a subject of periodic concern to the Branch. Primary interest was in preventing any net intelligence loss resulting from the export of U.S. gravity meters to Communist countries.



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